Burger King and a Little Understanding

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Burger King and a Little Understanding

by Azure_K_Mello

Summary

Will wanted to enjoy the opera but life for Will rarely went to plan and Jack Crawford had a tendency to ruin things. At least sugar and salt could be relied upon and Will isn't as friendless as he thinks.

This story is the fifth part of the Friendship is Not My Forte series.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Once they reached Hannibal's house the man showed him upstairs to a bedroom to change. Will was excited for the evening. The pleasure of owning a boat was still thrumming under his skin and maybe he'd like the opera. Even if he didn't like the opera he would spend the evening with Hannibal and that was a nice thought. He washed his face and hands. There was a comb on the sink and he combed his hair to be neater. He looked presentable; he looked fine; he put on his nicest suit and he thought he looked pretty great maybe even debonair.

He felt pretty great. He thought that might have been part of it. The drugs had been working and he wasn't sweaty and gray anymore. It was nice to feel like he was presentable for the first time in months.

But when he went downstairs he was suddenly much less certain. Hannibal looked truly fantastic in a tux. He looked so good in a tux Will desperately wanted to see him out of it. He was adjusting his cufflinks in his kitchen and Will had to swallow several times before he actually said, "I'm horribly underdressed, aren't I?"

Hannibal turned and smiled at him, looking him up and down. "There is something you should remember about the people who attend the opera." Will expected Hannibal to say the people would see through a nice suit. Or that Will would never be able to dress to their standards. "I need bodies for dinner parties. They are little more than that. Their company is pleasant in the correct situations. Their opinions on your appearance are moot. It is a nice suit and it hangs well on you. You look handsome. It is not a tux but a tux is not required any more than their approval is required for us to have a nice time at the opera. You look good."

Will felt the hint of a blush on his ears and turned away. When he blushed it never hit his face, a fact he was grateful for. 'Thanks. You can really wear a tux." Hannibal smiled. "I bet it's some super fancy designer I've never heard of, right?"

"I do not believe in designer labels."

"Well, that's something we have in common," said Will.

"All my suits are bespoke."

Will smiled, "Most of what I own comes from Walmart."

Hannibal laughed, "Are you ready?"

"Yes."

In the car Will said, "So, what is this? What language is it in? Is it in Italian? Will there be people dressed as Vikings?"

"No, that is Wagner's Der Ring des Nibelungen and is in German. We are seeing Verdi's Aida. It is Italian. It is a love story between an Egyptian warrior Radamès and an Ethiopian slave called Aida who belongs to the princess he's meant to marry." Hannibal gave him an overview as they drove. Finally he said, "There will be a screen in the back of the seat in front of you with a translation. You'll barely need it. It's much more about the emotions than

the words." When they got to the opera house Will saw a woman getting out of a car in a long, formal dress. But he took a deep breath and reminded himself that he would be sitting in a dark, cool room next to Hannibal for a few hours and that made social discomfort more bearable. Hannibal must have read Will's discomfort and said, "It was rude of me: I should have offered you a sedative before we left the house."

"The manners of doctors are so different from the manners of other people. I'll be okay." Will smiled as he opened the door. Washington's performing arts center was an architectural monstrosity and Will had never been inside before. He wondered what Hannibal thought of the place. He didn't ask.

A valet took the car keys from Hannibal saying, "Good evening, Dr. Lecter."

"Good evening," Hannibal replied. The valet didn't give Hannibal a ticket; he clearly knew the car and knew there would be no confusion as to which car was Hannibal's after the show. As they walked in he said softly, "We've missed the preshow drinks."

"Sorry," said Will.

"I assure you, Will, it was on purpose. I wanted to enjoy an evening with you, not put you through torture." No one asked to see tickets but a lot of the staff greeted him by name. Even an usher wished him a good evening without asking for tickets to direct them to seats. And, instead of going through the entrance to the hall where a few people were still going in, he walked up an opulent — garish — staircase and down landing to a door marked with the number seven. He opened the door and Will saw it was an empty box. "I was lying when I said I had a pair of tickets and I was understating when I said we would keep the social interactions to a minimum."

Will huffed a laugh. "Of course you have a private box. If anyone would have a private box, it would be you."

"Sometimes people bring children to the opera. It is rude to everyone around them and, to be frank, unkind to the child. To avoid ever having the misfortune of sitting next to a bored nine-year-old, I have a box. I share it with five colleagues and we take it in turns." Will laughed as they sat down. Hannibal scanned the playbill and said, "The young woman playing Aida is new. Her predecessor left suddenly a couple of months ago. They have been ceaselessly auditioning young female leads. Hopefully this young woman can hit a clean note. That would be a pleasant change."

"What happened to the last woman?"

"She just left, one night she shouted at everyone backstage and made a few people cry. She was upset about a lighting cue mistake, a prima donna in every sense. That was the last night she was here. They went to her flat and the place was empty save for an eloquent note that read, 'Fuck all of you.'"

"Charming," said Will.

"Vulgar and an inadequate singer. I believe that the company was pleased to see her go."

That seemed sad to Will. There should have been someone who missed her. One shouldn't be completely disconnected. Even he had people who would miss him and he wasn't easy to like. The lights started to dim and Will settled back into the very comfortable chair to watch. The room was draped in red and gold, like a child's idea of an opera house. But for all its tasteless-excess, the view of the stage was fantastic.

Will was nervous about getting too sucked into the plot. Just as he found fiction could be distressing, stories of all sorts had a tendency to get under his skin. This night he couldn't become completely engrossed because Hannibal was sat right next to him. He smelled good and Will could feel his warmth next to him. It took a large portion of his mind to remember not to lean into Hannibal. The urge was strong.

The girl could hit her notes and it was beautiful. He only half read the screen because the feeling of the play was impossible to miss. The words were superfluous to the story. Every once in a while Hannibal would lean in and whisper some point, a detail he felt was too good to miss. Will wondered if his complaints about children were just cover and if he really had a box so that he could whisper. Every time he whispered it ruffled the hair by Will's ear and Will was fighting not to sigh.

Then the curtain dropped and the lights came up. Will finally exhaled and Hannibal said, "What do you think of the opera?"

"It's wonderful."

Hannibal looked pleased, like he'd really wanted Will to like it. "Would you like a drink?"

Will sighed, "I suppose you need to mingle."

Hannibal laughed, "No, not at all." He stood and moved to the door and flipped a light switch. Nothing happened as Will stood and stretched. The door opened and a woman in all black came into the box.

"Good evening, Dr. Lecter." She smiled at Will.

"Will Graham," he supplied.

"Good evening, Mr. Graham. How are you both?"

Hannibal smiled, "Very well, thank you, Rachel. How are you?"

"I'm great. May I interest you in some drinks?"

"I would love a glass of champagne."

"Of course. And for you, Mr. Graham?"

"Do you have Coke?"

She shook her head, "We have Pepsi, is that okay?"

“That’s fine,” said Will, “thank you.” Pepsi was sweet, he’d liked it more than Coke but he dad had always said it had too much sugar and had only ever let him have Coke when he was little. As though Coke were any better. Even as an adult Will defaulted to ordering Coke.

“I’ll be right back. And I’ll bring some nibbles.”

She turned to go but Hannibal said, “Rachel?” She turned back. “What do you think of her?” he asked nodding toward the stage.

She gave him a slight smile, it was a conspirators smile, and Will realized that Hannibal was very much a part of this community. He was inside the walls. “Well, usually I’m not one for gossip but it’s only good gossip. She’s learned everyone’s name, is really excited to be the prima donna of the Washington National Opera and when the curtain broke the other day she didn’t scream for anyone to be fired. She just asked if we could jury-rig it if worst came to worst. With all that, and her voice and ear for pitch, it’s a pure pleasure to have her here.”

“Good,” said Hannibal. “I am so pleased for you.”

She smiled. “I’ll be right back.”

Hannibal watched as she left, turning off the switch behind herself. To Will Hannibal said, “The opera has an arrangement with Washington area universities. All the staff here are students in the performing arts departments. They get paid very little but they get credit, experience and see all the shows for free. They are all very earnest and polite. It is very nice to be surrounded by a staff who are as passionate about the opera as the audience is.”

Will felt a small smiled on his face. Hannibal liked his corner of the world to be perfect, ordered, pleasant and populated with only the good things in the world. In that respect they were very alike. But just like Will, some things were out of his control. Just like Will felt powerless to get away from Jack, the prima donna was out of Hannibal’s control. It was nice that she had left, that Hannibal’s world had rebalanced itself. It made him hope that Jack would write him a note telling Will to fuck himself.

As though thinking about him had made Jack alert, Will’s cell phone started to vibrate in his pocket. “Oh, no.” he pulled it out and, sure enough, it was Jack. He sighed.

“Don’t answer it.”

“He only calls when it’s important.”

“He used to only call you when it was important,” Hannibal corrected, “now he calls no matter how large or small it is. Don’t answer it.”

“What if it’s the Ripper?”

“If it’s the Ripper he can wait until afterwards,” Hannibal pointed out.

“I can’t turn off the phone. He’ll know. He’ll call again and it won’t ring and he’ll know I turned it off.” He didn’t want Jack to shout at him. Getting shouted at by Jack was terrifying. Jack was bigger than him and had a huge voice; the way the man towered over him tapped

into something primal that made Will want to cower and submit to avoid wrathful repercussions. He didn't work for Jack because he wanted to please him but because he felt he had little choice.

Hannibal reached out and waited for it to stop ringing before he started clicking through the settings. He handed it back saying, "It will not ring nor will it vibrate. Put it back in your pocket."

Will looked at it and said, "Thank you."

"Is the opera to your liking?"

"It's beautiful," said Will. "I don't understand why so many people don't like it."

"Many people simply assume they do not like it without ever attending a performance. My aunt introduced me to the opera in Paris when I was seventeen and I have adored it ever since."

"Are you close with your aunt?"

Hannibal shook his head, "We were exceptionally close. But I have not seen her since I left France for Baltimore when I was twenty-one. Our relationship was built on proximity and a mutual grief for my uncle. I do think of her whilst listening to Otello."

"I'm sorry."

"Do not apologize, Will, we parted on good terms but we had nothing in common. We were not blood and we had no need for each other."

Rachel came back and handed them their drinks from a tray and put a plate down with pretty snacks arranged artfully on it. She smiled at them both as they said thank you and she asked, "Would you like anything else this evening?"

"No, thank you. Enjoy the rest of the show."

"You too, Dr. Lecter." She nodded to Will, "It was nice to meet you, Mr. Graham."

"You too, Rachel."

She smiled, "Goodnight," she said as she left.

"That was the extent of our socializing this evening," said Hannibal.

"Thank you, it's very considerate of you."

"I want us to have a nice evening."

"I'm having a great time," Will said, taking a sip of his Pepsi.

"As am I," agreed Hannibal.

Will ate a tiny quiche as the lights in the auditorium started to dim on and off. Will sat back down and went back to enjoying the sensation of sitting next to Hannibal. For twenty minutes he was happy and comfortable, close to Hannibal and sipping too-sweet cola. Hannibal still whispered things, comments on things unique to this staging. Will ignored the people around and below them. In the box it was easy to imagine that he and Hannibal were alone with the players. It was easy slip into a reality wherein this show was just for them. But, unlike that poor trombonist Tobias Budge turned into a cello for an audience of one, this was sheer beauty and joy. Sadly, it only lasted twenty minutes.

The door to the box opened with a click and Will saw irritation flicker over Hannibal's face. It was only brief but seeing anything on Hannibal's face showed he felt the emotion very deeply. He was angry that someone was interrupting the show. And maybe, Will hoped, he was angry at someone interrupting their pleasant time together, a time devoid of work or illness, which had been solely theirs without the constructs and confines of their daily lives. Will turned and his heart sank: Jack Crawford was standing there. Standing Will exited the small area, closing the door behind himself. Just because he had to miss the play didn't mean Hannibal should have to do so as well.

"I've been calling you," said Jack without saying hello.

Will pulled his phone from his pocket and looked at it. "Sorry. Hannibal set my phone to silent; it doesn't even vibrate. I just thought I might need a clock but I didn't want to be interrupted." Thinking he said, "How did you find me?"

"I triangulated your cell."

Will wondered if that was even legal. "What's wrong?"

"I need you at a crime scene."

"Can it wait an hour? I'm really enjoying the opera and Hannibal really wanted to share this with me."

"I thought men only came to the opera to get laid," said Jack. It was crass and it was meant to cut.

"Obviously not," responded Will, not rising to the bait. "Just an hour, Jack."

"I can't do that, Will. I need you now."

Will nodded and said, "Do you really need me? Is this really bad enough, gruesome enough to really need me?"

"Will, I need you."

With another nod Will said, "Let me tell Hannibal. I need you to give me a ride."

"Fine," said Jack shortly.

Will opened the door, silently turning the knob so he could open and shut it silently. Hannibal looked at him, clearly wanting to know what was happening. “I’m really sorry. I’ve got to go.” He whispered.

“I understand. Although, this was not how I wanted the evening to end.”

“I’m sorry,” Will repeated. “How does it end?”

“I’ll tell you over breakfast when I bring your car to Wolf Trap.”

“I make really good waffles,” Will offered.

“Wonderful,” Hannibal replied.

“Thank you for helping me with the boat and for bringing me here. I’m sorry.”

“No apologies are needed,” Hannibal promised.

“Enjoy the rest of the show.”

“Goodnight, Will.”

Will took a sip of his soda and said, “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Will slipped out again and Jack was actually looking at his watch. Will hated social cues because they were so damn hard to follow, when you can be in anyone’s head it made it difficult to actually function in society. But he saw Jack’s irritation and as they walked out he said, “I was having a nice time here. I won’t apologize for having a social life. It’s an incredibly limited social life but I’m allowed one. You can’t triangulate my cell, interrupt my night and then be irritated when I agree to come but have to apologize to my host for leaving. There’s only so much you can expect from people. You’re not my boss and I am not the one being rude.”

Jack was illegally parked right outside and the valets looked pissed. Will kept his head down and Jack didn’t apologize. Will was silent as he buckled into the passenger seat. “Are you irritated because I interrupted a date?” asked Jack.

It wasn’t a date. Will knew that but he didn’t want to say it out loud. Instead he said, “You told me you were bedrock. You’re not; you’re not even sand: you’re quicksand. I protect the good things in my life so I don’t want to talk about it. I need to keep things separate because I don’t sleep without dreams anymore and I don’t want them getting muddier than they are. You shouldn’t have me in the field.”

“I don’t have anyone else who thinks like you think.”

Will felt tired and sad, robbed of a wonderful evening. He couldn’t quit; he didn’t want to get shouted at on top of everything else. But he was aggravated and pled his case, “You don’t need someone who thinks like I think. You need a profiler, that’s all. You have a great forensics team. You don’t even ask me for opinions on the science. All you want is the obscene party piece. You asked me if you broke me. The answer is yes. I’m broken. I am a

wild horse that you broke and now I can be both led to water and forced to drink. But that doesn't mean I should be here. A few days of class and writing don't fix it they just make going to a crime scene worse because I've gotten a taste of my normal life. You should remove me from the field."

Jack said nothing for a moment but then said, "I and my superiors disagree. There has been talk about cutting down your classroom hours. They've been so impressed with your work I think they'll be very disappointed. You're more useful to the Bureau in the field. It's not a party piece: it's a marketable skill."

Blood turning cold, Will sat silent. It was a barely veiled threat: leave the field and you're fired from Quantico. Will loved Quantico. He loved the safety and security of his classroom. And he did want to help people — help victims — working at Quantico meant he knew, without a doubt, that his knowledge would help people. But the field work hurt. The threat cut through his thoughts of quitting and felt like a betrayal. He couldn't speak, couldn't find the words. Instead he closed his eyes and pictured the fields around his house on a hot night. The dogs played, jumping through the uncut grass, barking noisily and always coming back to Will to seek his approval. Will sat on the back steps, sipping lemonade ice tea, watching them. Harry came to him and climbed into Will's lap, too old to frolic for extended amounts of time. He focused on the smell of the land, the feel of the warm dog resting on his knees and cold condensation on the glass in his hand. The car stopped and Will got out without looking at Jack. He let the imagined scene linger for a moment before taking in his physical location. It was a normal house and Will braced himself as he ducked under the crime tape.

He took gloves when he was offered them. The three bodies were dismembered and the parts were laid out into a word: S O R R Y. Two women and a man. Will walked around them, taking it in. He looked at the bloodstains and angles. Jimmy came to him and said, "This is John and Linda Eldon's house. They're two of the victims. We don't have an ID on the third victim. Called in about an hour ago. Uniform was on site in minutes. Mrs. Eldon died first, much less painfully than her husband and the woman. Mr. Eldon and the woman had been dead and dismembered less than an hour before uniform got here."

Will nodded and said, "Can I have the room for a few minutes?"

Jimmy nodded and started to move tech people out. Will studied the stains on the floor and knew that, for once, Jimmy, Zeller and Beverly hadn't been touching the bodies. The killer was a husband. This was love and vengeance. John Eldon had been having an affair with the unidentified woman. The killer was the wronged husband. He'd killed the lovers in revenge and, in his mind, he killed Linda Eldon as a kindness. He didn't blame her for the infidelity; he couldn't bear their betrayal and he didn't think she could have either. She had died first, fast, efficient. The lack of significant bleeding on her body parts showed she'd been quite dead when he'd taken her to pieces. John Eldon and the cheating woman had been ripped apart, still bleeding, causing most of the mess. The word was an apology for his inability to fix the problem as a whole. He thought he was fixing it a little bit. He thought finishing it all would be better in the long run. He would kill himself soon.

There was something about the blood, something Will was missing. The spread wasn't right. Under a woman's thigh there was a pair of shoes, explaining why there weren't bloody

footprints. The killer'd rolled up his pants and took off his shoes, leaving the mess behind him. But this had been passionate: rash and over the top. He hadn't planned, hadn't brought a second pair of shoes. Had he left the scene on bare feet? No. No.

He went out to the hallway where the others were waiting. He whispered as he said, "He's in the house. The killer is still in the house. Lock it down and search, in pairs. He's desperate. We don't want him to panic and injure someone trying to get out so make sure no one meets him alone." He moved to stand in the corner. There was a monster in the house so he kept himself safe as the others started to search. Jimmy raised an eyebrow at him as he was leaving and Will said, "I don't have a gun."

Even with uniform helping it took them over two hours before they found the guy in a crawl space behind the water heater in the attic. Will stood still the whole time, waiting. He didn't have a weapon and this man had cut three people up into chucks. He just wanted to go home, eat a burrito and go to bed. When they finally caught the man Will asked Beverly for a ride. He didn't want to go with Jack, didn't want to have to be alone with the man.

Beverly nodded, "Sure, back to the lab?" he nodded. She drove a white pickup, the exact same kind that all the popular girls down south wanted. It was beaten up and had a mostly peeled off hot pink bumper sticker proclaiming that girls kicked ass. "This is the Katzmobile. My parents bought it for me when I got into grad school. It's safe I swear. I make sure it's in good running order."

He smiled, looking down at his shoes, "I don't really worry about stuff like that. If we breakdown I'll just fix it."

"Wait, could you really do that?" She looked surprised.

"Yeah, as long as it's mechanical and not the computer chip. Why?" he asked as he climbed in and buckled his seatbelt. He trusted the truck more than her driving abilities. She had a tendency to gesticulate while speaking and that made Will nervous. She put her gun on safety and took out the magazine before putting it in the glove compartment.

"That is so hot. I was at a bar with my friends before I got the call from Jack. I've been being hit on all night by guys who have polish-less manicures. It was depressing. Real men are dying out," she pulled away from the curb smoothly.

"Please keep me and that part of your mind far apart."

"You look nice," she said.

"You do too, that doesn't mean either of our minds should go there."

"Where were you?" she asked. "That's a way nicer suit than you usually wear. Why don't you have your gun? I have mine in my car when I'm out."

"I was at the opera and I'm not real FBI so I don't carry it. I wasn't supposed to be here."

"Where's your car?"

“I left it at Hannibal’s house. He drove us to the opera.”

“Oh, I thought you were out to get lucky.”

“No, just to see the opera.” His stomach growled, “And then to dinner.”

She reached behind the seats, which worried Will but then she dropped a bag of Doritos onto his lap, it was held closed with a clothes peg. “There’s emergency supplies. Do you want to stop at Burger King? I want to stop at Burger King.”

“Let’s stop at Burger King,” agreed Will. They drove in silence. Will wasn’t sure if it was comfortable but he wasn’t uncomfortable as he ate Doritos. As they pulled up to the drive-thru Will pulled his wallet. “You drove I’ll pay. I want a whopper meal.”

“I never turn down a free meal. I want chicken nuggets. What soda do you want?”

“A Sprite, I’ll have enough problems sleeping without adding caffeine.”

“Caffeine has never done anything to me.” She pulled up and rolled down the window, the window had an actual crank. Will rolled the bag of chips closed and put the peg back on. She ordered the food and drove up to the next window. Opening his wallet she said, “Do you seriously have a picture of your dogs in your wallet?”

“It’s old. I need a new one: Winston isn’t in it.”

She handed back his wallet with the change deposited in it. Then she handed him the bag and sodas. They ate while driving, food balanced on laps and the dash. Will relaxed watching how in control of the car she was — even while eating fries. They cruised to the lab, and she said, “If Jack asks why we took so long, my back wheel went squeaky again. He won’t like it if we say we stopped for Burger King.”

“Okay,” agreed Will as he licked the salt and grease from his fingers. “I’m in enough trouble with Jack as it is.”

“For what?”

“For hating the job.”

“Do you hate it? I mean, do you actually hate it?”

“Yes,” he said, he didn’t say anything else. He looked out at the road, watching the snow as it fell. “Time is it?” he asked before looking at his watch, “God, it’s almost one.”

“I should be out still dancing and you… watching romantic comedies with the dogs?” she guessed.

“I don’t own a TV,” he replied, “I’d be asleep with the dogs.”

“You’re boring,” she said.

“If Jack let’s me be,” he nodded. “I bought a boat today, held together with rust and hope. It’s going to be a lovely project if I get the time. I like teaching, writing, boats and dogs.”

“Where’s your boat?”

“At Hannibal’s hooked to my car. He’s driving to my house in the morning. I’ll make him breakfast.”

She made a contemplative noise but said nothing. They pulled up in front of the lab and Beverly said, “Leave the evidence. I’ll throw it out later.”

He didn’t argue just took a last sip of his Sprite before getting out. Inside Jack said, “Where the hell have you been?”

“My back passenger wheel went wiggly again,” said Beverly, “Will fixed it.”

“I bodged it,” Will replied. “I really need a look at it in daylight.”

Jack made a small, irritated noise and said, “Beverly. I need you to process the killer. Will, I need you to walk me through the crime.”

Nodding Will followed the man into his office. It took Will an hour and a half to go through everything, exactly what evidence he’d followed to get to his conclusions, to realize what the man had done, why he’d done it and how he’d known the man was still there. Will’s blinks became longer and longer. When he was finally done Jack said, “You’re done: go home.”

Will nodded and felt like he was shuffling out of the office. Beverly was clearly finished, drinking coffee. She smiled at him and said, “I waited to give you a ride home.”

Shaking his head Will said, “It’s less than a mile. I can walk.”

“It’s snowing,” she pointed out.

Will shrugged, “So it’ll take me a little longer.”

“It’s almost three in the morning.”

“I’ll be fine.”

“It’s really not a problem,” she said, “It’ll be less than five minutes.”

Zeller and Jimmy were there, sorting through the evidence and Will didn’t really like saying anything in front of them. Jack was watching him with calculating eyes and Will felt awkward as he explained, “I don’t like people in my space.”

She blinked a couple of times, “So I drop you off at the end of your driveway. It’s still better than walking all the way in dress shoes in the snow.”

He hadn’t expected her to take it that way and said, “Thanks.” Back in the truck Will felt that one of the wheels was juddery. “That’s a balance issue. I think the axel is misaligned. It’s

going to cost around two hundred bucks to rotate the tires and have it realigned. It's not a big problem. You'll get charged for man time and use of the lift."

"It's really that simple?"

"Yeah. And it could get worse. The misalignment is going to keep feeding off itself so I would deal with it if it were my truck." He took a sip of his soda; it was colder than when he'd first gotten it. It wasn't a hard drive. Instead of cutting across the open fields, they drove around them.

It really did take less than five minutes and at his mailbox Beverly said, "Do you want me to stop here or go to the door?" She said it like it was a normal question.

"Here's good," Will said, "thank you, for the ride." He took the Burger King bag filled with their trash and said, "Have a good night." He opened the door and the cold invaded the cab like a rapid animal seeking skin to bite, to infect.

"You too, Will. Thanks for dinner."

He shut the door behind himself and gave the door two gently hits, signaling he was out, it was purely habit, years of driving around with a lot of guys in a truck. No one owned a car and one person would do the rounds, picking up and dropping everyone off on their way to and from the docks. When you were safely in or out of the back you slapped the side twice, letting the driver know they could drive again.

Will walked — trudged — up his drive to the house. His dogs greeted him with excitement and almost relief, like they had been afraid he was dead. He didn't care about the fur getting on his suit, he hugged them close, soaking up their excitement and pleasure. Inside he checked the whole house, making sure there were no monsters hiding. He'd not done it for years before he met Jack. That part of his fear had lain dormant and was now awake, crying out for Will to deal with it, to assuage the need.

Thankfully the house was small and it wasn't long before Will was falling into bed, face unwashed and teeth unbrushed. He felt Winston flop onto him. On some nights that would be irritating, too much weight crushing the air from him and making it hard to breath, too much heat making Will hot. But tonight Will was grateful for the weight pushing him down, grounding him and keeping his mind in the room.

He fell asleep thinking back to the opera. He hoped Aida had a happy ending. He would find out in the morning.

End Notes

Will's obviously wrong; Hannibal is totally in control of his world. I'd like everyone to take a moment to imagine Hannibal quickly emptying the prima donna's apartment and forging a note in a girly hand that says, "Fuck all of you."

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